

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
AK-040-04-EA-012

Applicant: Bureau of Land Management
Anchorage Field Office

Type of
Action: Installation of Bridge Spanning North Fork of Little Campbell Creek, Alaska

Location: Section 10, T. 12 N., R. 3 W., Seward Meridian
Latitude 61° 09.362, Longitude 149° 47.535

Prepared
By: Chuck Denton, Hydrologist

Preparing
Office: Bureau of Land Management
Anchorage Field Office
6881 Abbott Loop Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99507

Date: February 10, 2004

I. INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) maintains the Campbell Tract (CT), a 730 acre administrative site located within the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA), Alaska. Located on CT are office facilities for the BLM Anchorage Field Office (AFO) and several state office branches, a warehouse, the Campbell Creek Science Center and maintenance shops, a 5,000 foot gravel airstrip, multiple helicopter landing pads, three communication sites, and approximately 12 miles of multi-use public trails. Meandering through portions of the CT and intersecting its trail system are two streams, the South Fork of Campbell Creek to the north and the North Fork of Little Campbell Creek (NFLCC) to the south. On average the CT provides recreational opportunities for approximately 40,000 user days per year.

A. Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action:

Winding through portions of CT is the Coyote Trail which crosses over the NFLCC by bridge. The bridge has limited weight capacity and restricts the crossing of heavy modern day emergency vehicles. It also provides insufficient freeboard to accommodate a rise in water levels 3.0 inches above observed base flow. Replacing the bridge with a bridge designed to support a greater weight and increased freeboard will provide for a safer crossing by emergency response vehicles and reduce the likelihood of being overtopped by the underlying stream.

B. Conformance with Land Use Plan:

This action is in conformance with the South-central Management Framework Plan (MFP), dated March 1980. The Management Plan for Public Use and Resource Management on the Bureau of Land Management Campbell Tract Facility (June 1988) identifies the project area as part of the Dispersed Recreation Zone. The management objective for the Dispersed Recreation Zone is to allow and enhance non-motorized, dispersed recreation uses where compatible with operation of the administrative facility and to allow new trail development as needed.

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

A. Proposed Action:

The Proposed Action is to install a new bridge on the CT at the Coyote Trail/NFLCC crossing in Section 3, T. 12 N., R. 3 W., Seward Meridian (Latitude 61° 09.362, Longitude 149° 47.535). (See attached map.) This bridge will be constructed off site in Anchorage, Alaska and ground transported to the stream crossing by use of established trails. The bridge will be replaced when the trails are dry to prevent trail damage and stream bank damage with equipment. The new bridge will be of steel construction, approximately 30 feet (ft.) in length, with an unobstructed rail to rail width of 12 ft., with a minimum weight tolerance of 18,000 pounds (lbs). It is anticipated that there will not be a need to remove or damage any vegetation to facilitate the transportation and installation of this

structure. A minimal amount of soil may be removed or added for proper contouring at the trail/bridge interface. A temporary stream crossing will be installed during construction to accommodate trail users and reduce stream bank and stream bed damage caused by traffic. Vegetative cover will be planted where the bridge structure meets the stream bank to prevent soil erosion. Signs will be posted on Homestead, Abbott Loop and Coyote Trails warning recreational users of the bridge construction activities. The actual bridge crossing will be closed to traffic as needed to facilitate safe construction. A temporary-alternate trail and bridge will be in place, immediately downstream of the construction site, to protect streambanks and prevent erosion from recreational traffic.

B. No Action Alternative:

The No Action Alternative is to leave the present bridge in place and continue to utilize the bridge in its existing condition.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

A. Critical Elements:

The following critical elements of the human environment are either not present or would not be affected by the Proposed Action or Alternative:

Air Quality

Floodplains

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

Environmental Justice

Farmlands, Prime/Unique

Native American Religious Concerns

Invasive, Non-native Species

Wastes, Hazardous and Solid

Wetlands/Riparian Zones

Water Quality, Surface and Ground

Wild and Scenic Rivers

Wilderness

1. Cultural Resources:

The AFO Archaeologist inspected the project area on July 3, 2003. No cultural resources were observed in the area that would be disturbed during construction.

2. Subsistence

The CT lands are Federal Public Land as defined in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), Section 810 and fall under the authority of the Federal Subsistence Board and the Subsistence Regulations for the Harvest of Fish and Wildlife on Federal Public Lands in Alaska. The CT lies within the Anchorage Management Unit of Game

Management Unit 14C under which the current Subsistence Regulations noted above is closed to the taking of wildlife under both State (hunting and trapping) and Federal Subsistence Regulations. The taking of wildlife on the CT is further limited by Supplemental Rules issued on November 20, 1998 under 43 CFR 8365.1-6 that closed the CT to the use of firearms, archery equipment, traps, or snares. The CT has no documented consistent use by rural Alaskans of fish or game and no knowledge of such use has become available since the inception of the Federal Subsistence Program or the issuance of the noted Supplementary Rules.

3. Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species:

There are no known Federal T&E animal or plant species found at CT.

B. Land Status:

The project area is within the 730 acre Campbell Tract Facility (CTF), an area withdrawn for use as an administrative site for the BLM. On February 11, 2002 Public Land Order 6127 extended the withdrawal for the area for twenty years.

C. Recreation:

The CT is designated for non-motorized recreational use. Recreation management for the CT is directed by the June 1988 "A Management Plan for Public Use and Resource Management on the Bureau of Land Management Campbell Tract Facility". There are approximately 12 miles of developed recreation trails on CT. Some of these trails link to a wider trail system on the adjoining MOA Far North Bicentennial Park (FNBP). The proximity of the CT to urban Anchorage places high demands on the site from a variety of users. Most recreation occurs on trails that were developed on old tank roads and airplane taxiways. Access for recreation use on CT is gained from two formal on-site trailheads and four trails entering from FNBP. Established trailheads with parking include the Smoke Jumper Trailhead located at the main CTF AFO complex entrance, the Campbell Airstrip Trailhead located at mile 1.1 on Campbell Airstrip Road. Trail maintenance, signing, and event permitting is a cooperative effort between the BLM, MOA Parks and Recreation Department, and various volunteers and user groups. Recreation users are primarily residents of Anchorage and surrounding communities. The estimated 2002 visitation was 40,000 user days. User activities are walking, running, mountain-biking, skiing, snowshoeing, dog-mushing and horseback riding throughout the CT. Many users live close to CT and use the area regularly for exercise, often with their family dogs. Regular competitive events, often starting on FNBP lands traverse CT including the Nordic Ski Club's Tour of Anchorage and the World Sled Dog Championship Races.

D. Wildlife:

CT provides habitat for most of the terrestrial animal species found in south central Alaska. Moose are common and use the tract for calving in the spring and wintering habitat. Black bear, brown bear and wolf use the CT and move from higher elevations during seasonal changes or in search of food sources such as berries, salmon and moose calves. Snowshoe hares are abundant and support a lynx population that cycle with the hare population. Coyotes are seen and heard regularly and breed in the area. Other animals found on the CT include beaver, red fox, porcupine, red squirrel, wood frog and several species of microtine rodents.

There are about 20 bird species that are year-round residents, and an additional 21 migrant species that breed on the CT. Horned owls, saw-whet and boreal owls breed in the CT's forest habitats, and bald eagles nest in adjacent areas and use the CT's prey base to raise young. During fall migration, studies using mist netting and bird banding have documented 42 species of resident and migrant land birds using the CT's forest and shrub habitat. The olive-sided flycatcher, gray-cheeked thrush, Townsend's warbler, and blackpoll warbler move through the CT and are included on the State of Alaska's list for Species of Special Concern.

CT serves as a buffer and migration corridor, especially for moose, wolf and bear, between urban areas and Chugach State Park reducing wildlife conflicts with people. The CT is a recognized watchable wildlife site, and is integral to the "Living with Wildlife in Anchorage" cooperative planning effort which includes a memorandum of understanding with three State and six Federal agencies.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A. Impacts of the Proposed Action:1. Recreation:

Recreation activities within the immediate construction area may be temporarily restricted for safety concerns due to trail and bridge closures. Many recreational users will not be discouraged from using the trail even when officially closed and without a temporary bridge would likely cross the stream above and below the construction site resulting in increased stream bank erosion and social trailing.

2. Wildlife:

Construction activities, such as noise and the presence of people and equipment, may create short-term impacts to CT wildlife by driving some species from feeding and reproductive habitats. Forest nesting birds may not reproduce, abandon nest sites, or leave the area for the season if disturbed or displaced during the breeding season. Work crews installing

the bridge may encounter moose or brown and black bears, and potentially cause them to be shot in defense of life and property.

Streambank erosion from the disturbance at the construction site may increase and impact spawning salmon and resident fish by increasing sedimentation down stream.

3. Hydrology:
Installation of a structure with greater freeboard will reduce the potential of stream flows overtopping the bridge.

B. Impacts of the No Action Alternative:

1. Recreation:
There will be no impacts to recreation under the No Action Alternative.
2. Wildlife:
There would be no disturbance to wildlife from construction activities.
3. Hydrology:
The potential for the stream to overtop the bridge will remain high due to reduced freeboard.

C. Cumulative Impacts:

No cumulative impacts are expected by implementation of the Proposed Action.

D. Mitigation Measures:

Erosion barriers should be placed around the construction area to reduce erosion potential into the stream.

Construction activity should be allowed only when weather and trails allow movement of heavy equipment without damage to the trails.

V. **CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION**

A. List of Preparers:

Donna Redding - Cultural Resources
Bruce Seppi - Wildlife Biologist
Jeff Denton - Wildlife Biologist
Rodney Huffman - Realty Specialist